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## BAUDRILLARD'S MAXIMIZATION HYPOTHESIS AND THE FLIGHT INTO UNCERTAINTY (1)

ALL, PHILOFICTION BAUDRILLARD, END OF HISTORY, HEGEL, SYSTEM

The utopia of its correspondence with the world/object as well as its ability to reshape the world according to its image, striven for by classical theory, can only come about due to a difference between it and the world, insofar as it also always leaves something out of the world or something escapes from it. But it is precisely classical theory and philosophy that try to establish an equivalence between sign and object, indeed between themselves and their Other. The system does the same. Accordingly, a crucial problem of theories and philosophers after Hegel is

how to think an Other to this system, which admits no Other because the Other is its own internal object. The solution is not simply the refutation or invention of alternatives to Hegel, but a thinking of what is excluded to allow for the all-inclusion of the system, this Other that is excluded to ensure that the system has no Other.

For Baudrillard, the crux of the theory is, on the one hand, to make an immanent statement or an immanent description about a system that follows its internal logic, including the integration of the Other, to the end, thus adding nothing to it qua theory, and yet completely reversing it, showing that it is impossible without this Other or Nothing, but that it itself also makes it impossible. It is a statement that is at once a pure description of the system, speaking of it in terms of reality, and at the same time a pure prescription of the system, showing that it either excludes the real or cannot capture it. The complex position of Baudrillard himself is then to write simultaneously outside and inside the systems of simulation.

Baudrillard writes within and through the systems. He wisely refrains from proposing alternatives to them or painting colorful utopias, but argues against them within their own conditions and logics. According to Baudrillard, one must do this because the system functions by constantly appropriating the other and others. (One question would be whether it can recover the third or the stranger as conceived by Kurt Röttgers, because it is not possible to get the third into view at all within the framework of intersubjective theories of recognition (Habermas, etc.), which are the vanguard of the system in terms of subjectification). For Baudrillard, to propose an alternative to the system is only to confirm and affirm it even more.

Perhaps alternatives existed before the capitalist system, after it they no longer exist because the system is simply the way it is; for Baudrillard it has reached that maximized state which indicates that all alternatives are possible only because the system exists. This sounds fatal, and it is, but it testifies to no necessity whatsoever. For the specter of contingency, like the old Althusser, haunts Baudrillard's texts, a specter that whispers that he is going too far in his analysis, that there is ultimately no need for this maximization hypothesis.

History is only possible because of the end of history (the totalization of the system), but at the same time history has never reached and will not reach this state. If the system has indeed reached this totalizing state of the end that Baudrillard believes it has reached, then it is always also possible that this statement is always only a function of this system, and that the subtle play of the specter breathing down Baudrillard's neck, namely that there is contingency after all, only repeats the logic of the already existing system, namely because the latter can transform uncertainty into a tradable risk (derivative). Perhaps Baudrillard himself does not go far enough, in that instead of opposing the system with a real Other, he ultimately proposes only a simple alternative to it, precisely the kind of opposition that serves to prove it all the more true.

It seems impossible, then, to assert the correctness of Baudrillard's maximization hypothesis in the face of the system that may actually maximize it. The end of history that Baudrillard speaks of that makes history possible (a perversion of the end of history that Marx sees in communism) is not the final explanation of history that precedes it and makes it possible. On the one hand, the

hypothesis goes too far, because it is only open to us to argue against the system in its own logics, if this is true according to Baudrillard's maximization hypothesis, as well as it does not go far enough, because it can also only be an effect of the already maximized system. But now comes the big but: If, after all, it is impossible to assert the primacy of the maximization hypothesis over the system, then it is also impossible to assert the primacy of the system over this hypothesis. Or to apply it to history: If it is true that the end of history is possible only because of history, then it is also conceivable that history is possible only because of the end of history. The decision whether there is first the story or the end of the story remains undecided. And so an ingenious trick helps Baudrillard weaken the system's affirmation of history over the end of history, namely, that the way that it is history that leads to the end of history can always be opposed, that it is simply the other way around. Against the totalization of the system (the system is always seen through its other, but this other is, after all, only possible through the system; history is over because of the fact that there is history of the eternally same), Baudrillard proposes a logic that is both equal and opposite (history will not end, there is always more history, but only because history is over).

Thus, Baudrillard's maximization hypothesis (Rex Butler) does not simply assert its rightness over the system, but scratches at the limits of systems that seem to explain themselves self-referentially, or that have no other and are not preceded by anything. One can always invert such systems, thus always specifying something that precedes them and that enables and disables their totalization, i.e., their ability to explain and appropriate everything. If Baudrillard follows the logic of these systems to challenge them, it is by opening a possibility to double the hypothesis itself by indicating that there is always a certain something-nothing that is excluded and makes their self-definition possible in the first place. Baudrillard's maximization hypothesis unleashes a principle of uncertainty: namely, if this uncertainty initially applies only to the hypothesis itself, it also applies to the very system that it in turn seeks to duplicate. And this uncertainty or insecurity strengthens the maximization hypothesis, which does not try to assert its priority over the system at all; but it is disastrous for the system, insofar as it has to assert its priority over the maximization hypothesis.

The economy in Baudrillard's writings is dual. On the one hand, there is this tendency toward the maximalist hypothesis as a kind of total explanation of the way the logics of the system and things are. The hypothesis does not operate by reason or conviction, but it wants to be effective at once, thus forcing either immediate agreement or disagreement. It is an imageless thinking, because not an object or a reality is grasped or reflected, it rather testifies on a gnosticism or a kind of higher rule (like a pharmakon, which holds two opposite meanings). On the other hand, there always remains a certain necessity for description and utterance, that is, a certain object and words that try to describe it. If it is only by being singular and differential in itself that writing is able to describe a world that is also incomparable, then it must also be emphasized that the language that leads to writing could only become so by imitating a world that already exists (which, in turn, could not have been known as such before its imitation by writing). Scripture, then, from this point of view, always has a referent. If it is their mutual incomparability that allows the world and its writing to be compared, then it is also their comparison that allows their mutual

incomparability.

Baudrillard says that the end of history has occurred because we cannot think this end. And yet Baudrillard wants to think this precisely. For the end to be possible, even that end where there is no end, as the system would have us believe, there must always be a moment afterward from which it can be thought. Baudrillard's irony is to assume that the end he speaks of will never occur, which is why the first day of the rest of life will always be tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. In the end, Baudrillard does not want to assert a simple finality of history and thus the final victory of the system, because the possibility of stating this would ironically always postpone the system. Thus, the end of history as the victory of the system cannot function as the final declaration of the system, for it would only be possible because of the system and could only lead to a further extension of the system. Rather, it is precisely the simultaneity of the end and its impossibility that Baudrillard speaks of and that leads the system to catastrophe. He uses a moment of difference from Derrida here. It is impossible to pass from one moment to the next to reach the end, but this is only because we have already passed from one moment to the next, because every moment is the end, at least for the time being. It is about a logic of time in which there are no identical events beyond a description that traces identity, but precisely in an actuality that is always already consequence and that will only be too late in the consequence that it says something for something.

Theory, as Baudrillard does it, does not emerge through the accumulation of evidence nor through simple discontinuities; rather, it moves through a series of hypotheses that describe the logic of the system (one remains, when speaking of the system, always an accomplice of the system) and that at the same time go beyond it to show that the system emerges only as the effect of a broader problematic. Here Baudrillard harks back to Deleuze's conception of the problem. Like Deleuze, Baudrillard knows that the great philosophical systems are singular and logically correct in themselves, and never refute the preceding systems. At best, Deleuze argues, one can make them a child from behind. Every subsequent thinker must somehow duplicate the previous system, Baudrillard argues, and show that it is as it is for reasons that go beyond it. One considers the prior system only in its own terms, describing that it is necessarily so, but showing that this necessity comes about only for reasons completely contrary to the proclaimed intentions of the system.

translated by deepL.

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